

Arts of Theology – Words, Sound, and Power: A Reflection

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Course

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Outline

I. Introduction and Main Arguments

II. Critique

III. Knowledge Gained

IV. Conclusion

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Introduction and Main Arguments

The given reading reflection will primarily focus on the foundation and development of the Rastafari culture and set of belief systems. The first argument of the reflection is manifested in the notion of racism and colonialism being the major forces, which stem from a power imbalance. Colonialism created exploitation and racial oppression among African people, especially in Ethiopia, where Marcus Mosiah Garvey experienced these influences firsthand (Erskine 116). It was evident that oppression was not solely rooted in education and racism, but it also affected economically and socially. In other words, the scale of colonial exploitation on the basis of one's race was also tightly interlinked with the inequality among classes. Therefore, Dr. Robert Love's point perfectly reflects how many race-based exploitative practices stem from power imbalance between a colony, such as Ethiopia, and the mainland, such as Britain.

It should be noted that Garvey's experience with colonial oppression and racial exploitation were fundamental in shaping his beliefs and further goals. The hardships experienced by him and by African people sparked his search for Africa ethnocentric framework, which would bring both spiritual and pragmatic means for leading a proud and meaningful life. One of the interesting aspects of the reading is that there are major differences between Garveyism and Rastafari. Such distinctive elements come in different forms, and a direct example is ganja or weed, which was opposed by Garvey, whereas Rastas valued the plant (Erskine 122). The main emphasis was put on the notion of weed being damaging to both the user and surrounding people since Garvey claimed that it encourages dismissal of one's problems and worsens fanaticism. Therefore, the influence of Garvey was a dichotomous one, where his ideas brought core principles to the Rastafari culture and opposing points of view.

The class-related spread of the Rastafari movement is a demonstration of how power plays a critical role in its adoption. Initially, the subculture was predominant only among lower-class people, which was reflected in language and speech (Pollard 4). However, as black individuals experienced a higher degree of empowerment, the belief system was also adopted by the middle class (Erskine 122). Although both the Rasta movement and Garvey were primarily focused on black empowerment, the latter put a higher degree of emphasis on pragmatic aspects of life, whereas the former accentuated visionary elements.

Rasta art is among the most prominent and expressive sides of the movement. It is critical to comprehend that it is the combination of the context and delivery of an art form, such as music, that makes Rasta culture appealing to non-Rasta individuals. For example, the concept of Babylon is greatly explored in Bob Marley's works, where the term is referred to a place where black people are subjugated and oppressed (Erskine 149). This sets up the importance of the motherland or homeland, which is Africa in general, but also Ethiopia as a specific nation. The notion clearly manifests the connection between God or Jah and Africa, which substantiates the concept of black-centered theology based on empowerment rather than subjugation.

Critique

The core critique that can be expressed in regard to the reading is that the author does not tend to provide a clear differentiation between the importance of love and black power. Erskine notes that "many black people feel they can love themselves only if they love white people" (152). Such a statement seems to lack evidence since the group might lack self-love and appreciation, which is not connected to white people. For instance, it is possible for the majority of black people to exhibit self-love without any involvement of white individuals or promote black empowerment through indifference to white people with a greater degree of emphasis on culture development and improvement of racial and ethnic bonds within the

community. Therefore, the statement seems to be unsubstantiated, and thus, cannot be used to build subsequent points on it.

Knowledge Gained

The reading was highly comprehensive and insightful since it explores core historical and cultural, as well as theological intricacies of the Rastafari movement's development and evolution throughout the years. Starting with Garvey, Rasta culture underwent a series of transformations, where the sole purpose of black empowerment was at its core. It is evident that the movement greatly promoted the notion with a significant degree of success, which is evidenced by changes in Jamaica and African nations. Linking core religious beliefs with more fundamental social elements, such as love and appreciation, enabled a more widespread black empowerment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Rasta movement and its different manifestations had a number of differential elements regarding practices, such as Garvey's view of ganja, but the core objectives of black empowerment and cultural restoration post-colonial oppression were achieved. The global spread of the black ethnocentric belief system is an excellent demonstration of how love and self-appreciation can be generally applied to all people. Although the reading occasionally makes unsubstantiated points, the insightful and comprehensive observations and explanations can be categorized as accurate and informative.

Works Cited

Erskine, Noel L. *From Garvey to Marley*. University Press of Florida, 2007.

Pollard, Velma. *Dread Talk: The Language of the Rastafari*. Canoe Press, 2000.